

The Poor Unhappy Transported Felon's

Sorrowful account of fourteen Years Transportation,

At *Virginia in America.*

39

In Six P A R T S.

- I. His Birth, Parentage and Education, giving an account how he was put Apprentice to a Tin-man near Moor-fields, where he fell into bad company and ran away from his Master.
- II. How five of his comrades were hang'd & he and another transported to Virginia.
- III. How he was sold to a Planter, with the barbarous usage he received from him.
- IV. How he fell sick with hard labour and the cruel treatment he met with from him.
- V. How his master died and he was bought by a Cooper, who not only used him well but sent him home when his time was expir'd.
- VI. How he came home to England, where he found his parents in good health, with his wholesome advice to all Youth.

By JAMES RUEL the Unhappy Sufferer.

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The Transported Felons. (Tune, Death and the Lady.)

MY loving countrymen pray lend an ear,
 To this relation which I bring you here,
 My sufferings at large I will unfold,
 What tho' its strange it's true as e'er was told.

Of honest parents I did come tho' poor,
 Who besides me had never children more,
 Near Temple bar was born their darling Son,
 And for some years in virtuous paths did run.

My Parents in me took great delight,
 And brought me up at school to read and write,
 And cast accounts likewise as it appears,
 Unrill that I was aged thirteen years.

Then to a Tin man I was prentice bound,
 My master and my mistress good I found,
 They lik'd me well, my business I did mind,
 From me my parents comfort hop'd to find.

My Master near unto Moor fields did dwell,
 Where into wicked company I fell,
 To wickedness I quickly was inclin'd,
 Thussoon is tainted any youthful mind.

I from my master then did run away,
 And rovd' about the streets both night and day,
 Did with a gang of rogues a thieving go,
 Which fill'd my parents' hearts with grief and woe.

At length my Master got me home again,
 And us'd me well in hopes I might reclaim,
 My Father to me tenderly did say,
 My dearest child what made you run away.

If you had any cause at all for grief,
 Why came you not to me to seek relief,
 I well do know you did for nothing lack,
 Food for your belly nor clothes for your back.

My mother cry'd dear son I do implore,
 That you wist from your master go no more,
 Your business mind, your master ne'er forsake,
 Lest you again to wicked courses take,

I promis'd fair but yet could not refrain,
 But to my vile companions went again.

For vice when once alas ! it taints the mind,
It's not soon rooted out again we find.

A wretched life I liv'd I must confess,
In fear and dread and great uneasiness,
Which does attend such actions that's unjust,
For thieves can never one another trust.

Strong liquor banish'd all the thoughts of fear,
But justice stop'd us in our full career,
One night was taken up one of our gang.
Who five impeach'd, and three of them were hang'd.

I was one of the five was try'd and cast,
Yet transportation I did get at last,
A just reward for my vile actions past,
Thus justice overtook me at the last.

My father griev'd, my mother she look'd wan,
And cry'd alas ! alas ! my only son,
My father cry'd, it cut me to the heart,
To think on such occasion we must part.

To see them griev'd pierc'd my very soul,
My wretched case I sadly did console,
With grief and shame my eyes did overflow,
And I'd much rather chuse to die than go.

In vain I griev'd, in vain my parents wept,
For I was quickly sent on board the ship,
With melting kisses and a heavy heart,
I from my dearest parents then did part.

P A R T II.

IN a few days we left the river quite,
And in short time of land we lost the sight,
The Captain and the sailors us'd us well,
But kept us under least we should rebel.

We were in number much about three score,
A wicked lousy crew as e'er went o'er,
Oaths and tobacco with us plenty were,
For most did smoke and all did curse and swear.

Five of our number in the passage died,
Which soon was thrown into the ocean wide,
And after sailing seven weeks or more,
We at Virginia all were set on shore.

Where to refresh us we were washed clean,
That to our buyers we might better seem,
Our things were gave to each they did belong,
And they that had clean linen put it on.

They shav'd our faces, comb'd our wigs and hair,
That we in decent order might appear,
Against the planters did comedown to view,
How well they lik'd this fresh transported crew.

The women from us separated stood,
As well as us by them for to be view'd,
And in short time men up to us came,
Some ask'd our Trades and others ask'd our names.

Some view'd our limbs and others turn'd us round,
Examining (like horses) if we were sound,
What Trade are you my lad says one to me,
A Tin-man sir,—that will not do said he.

Some felt our hands and view'd our legs and feet;
And made us walk to see if we were compleat.
Some view'd our teeth to see if they were good,
Or fit to chew our hard and homely food.

If any lik'd our looks, or limbs or trade,
The Captain then a good advantage made,
For they a difference made it did appear,
"Twixt those for seven and those for fourteen years.

Another difference too there is allow'd,
They who have money have most favour shew'd,
For if no clothes nor money they have got,
Hard is their fate and hard will be their lot.

At length a grim old man unto me came,
He ask'd my trade and likewise my name,
I told him I a Tin-man was by trade,
And not quite eighteen years of age I said.

Likewise the cause I told that brought me there;
That I for fourteen years transported were,
And when he this from me did understand,
He bought me of the captain out of hand.

P A R T III.

DOwn to the harbour I was took again,
On board a sloop, and loaded with a chain.

Which I was forc'd to wear both night and day,
For fear I from the sloop should get away.

My master was a man but of ill fame,
Who first of all a transport thither came.
In Rappanock county he did dwell,
Up Rappahanock river it's known well.

And when the sloop with loading home was sent,
An hundred miles he up the river went.
The weather cold, and very hard my fare,
My lodging on the deck both hard and bare.

At last to my new master's house I came,
At the town of Wicomico call'd by name,
Where my European clothes were took from me,
Which never after I again did see.

A canvas shirt and trowsers then they gave,
And a hop sack frock in which I was to slave,
No shoes nor stockings had I for to wear,
Nor hat nor cap both head and feet were bare.

Thus dress'd into the field I next must go,
Amongst Tobacco plants all day to hoe,
At day break in the morning our work begun,
And so he'd to the setting of the sun.

My fellow slaves were just five transports more;
With nineteen Negroes which were twenty four,
Besides four transport women in the house,
To wait upon his daughter and his spouse.

We and the negroes all alike did fear,
Of work and food we had an equal share,
For in a piece of ground we call'd our own,
The food we eat first by ourselves were sown.

No other time to us they did allow,
But on a Sunday we the same must do,
Six days we slave for our master's good.
The seventh day is to produce our food.

Sometimes when we a hard day's work have done,
Away unto the mill we must be gone,
Till twelve or one o'Clock a grinding corn,
Yet must be up at day light in the morn.

And if we offer for to run away,

For every day a week they're so severe,
 For every week a month, for every month a year;
 And if you run in debt with any one
 It must be paid before from thence you come,
 For in public places they'll put up your name,
 That every one their just demands may claim.
 But if they murder, rob, or steal when there,
 They're straightway hang'd the laws are so severe,
 For by the rigour of that very law,
 They're much kept under and do stand in awe.

P A R T IV.

AT length it pleased God I sick did fall,
 But I no favour could receive at all,
 For I was forc'd to work while I could stand,
 Or hold the hog within my feeble hand.

Much hardship then indeed I did endure,
 No dog was ever used so I'm sure,
 More pity the poor Negro slaves bestow'd,
 Than my unhuman brutal master shew'd.

Oft on my knees the Lord I did implore,
 To let me see my native land once more,
 For through God's grace my life I would amend,
 And be a comfort to my dearest friends.

Helpless and sick, and being left alone,
 I by my self did use to make my moan,
 And think upon my former wicked ways
 How they had brought me to this wretched case.

The Lord above who seen my grief and smart,
 Heard my complaints and knew my contrite heart,
 His gracious mercy did to me afford;
 My health again was unto me restor'd.

It pleased the Lord to grant me so much grace,
 That tho' I was in such a barbarous place,
 I serv'd the Lord with fervency and zeal,
 By which I did much inward comfort feel.

Thus twelve long years had passed away,
 And but two more by law I had to stay,
 When death did for our cruel master call,
 But that was no relief to us at all.

The widow could not the Plantation hold,
 So we and that was both for to be sold,
 A lawyer rich, who at James-Town did dwell,
 Came down to view and lik'd it very well.

He bought the Negroes who for life were slaves,
 But no transported Felons would he have,
 So we were put like sheep into a fold,
 There unto the best bidder to be sold.

P A R T V.

A Gentleman who seemed something grave,
 Unto me said, how long have you to slave,
 Not quite two years I unto him reply'd,
 That is but very short indeed he cry'd.

He ask'd my name and from whence I came,
 And what vile fact had brought me to that shame,
 I told him all, at which he shook his head,
 I hope you've seen your folly now he said.

I told him yes, and truly I'd repent,
 But that which made me most of all lament,
 That I should to my parents prove so vile,
 I being their darling son and only child.

He said no more but from me short did turn,
 While from my eyes the tears did trinkling run,
 I seen him to our overseer to go,
 But what he said to him I do not know.

He straightaway then did come to me again,
 And said no longer here you must remain,
 For I have bought you of that man said he,
 Therefore prepare yourself to go with me.

I with him went with heart oppress'd with woe,
 Not knowing him or where I was to go,
 But I was very much surpriz'd to find,
 He used me so tenderly and kind.

He said he would not use me like a slave,
 But as a servant if I well behav'd,
 And if I pleas'd him when the time expir'd,
 He'd send me home again if I requir'd.

P A R T VI.

Thus did I live in plenty and at ease,
 Having none but my master for to please.

And if at any time he did ride out,
I with him rode the country round about.

At length my fourteen year expired quite,
Which fill'd my very soul with fond delight,
To think I should no longer there remain,
But to old England once return again.

My master for me did express much love,
And as his promise he to me did prove,
He got a ship and I came home again,
With joy and comfort tho' I went with shame.

My father and my mother well I found,
Who to see me with joy did much abound,
My mother over me did weep for joy,
My father cry'd once more to see his boy.

Whom I thought dead but does alive remain,
And is return'd to me once more again,
I hope that God has wrought so on your mind,
No more to wickedness you'll be inclin'd.

I told them all the hardships I went thro',
Likewise my sickness and my danger too,
Which fill'd their tender hearts with strange surprize,
While tears ran trickling from their aged eyes.

I beg them from all grief for to refrain,
Since God has brought me to them home again,
The Lord unto me so much grace will give,
For to work for you both while you do live.

My countrymen take warning e'er too late,
Least you should share my late unhappy fate,
Altho' but little crime you here have done,
Consider seven or fourteen years to come.

Forc'd from your friends and country for to go,
Amongst the Negro's to work at the hoe,
In distant countries void of all relief,
Sold for a slave because you prov'd a thief.

Therefore young men with speed your lives amend,
Take my advice as one that is your friend,
For tho' so slight you make of it here,
Hard is your lot if once they get you there.